DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 328 367 PS 019 480

AUTHOR	Kunesh, Linda
TITLE	Early Childhood Education for At-Risk Children: A National Perspective.
INSTITUTION	North Central Regional Educational Lab., Elmhurst, IL.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	89
CONTRACT	400-86-0004
NOTE	5p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
JOURNAL CIT	Policy Briefs; n2 1989
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*At Risk Persons; *Early Intervention; Educational Needs; Educational Policy; Educational Resources; *Federal Programs; *Preschool Education; State of the Art Reviews; *State Programs; *Young Children
IDENTIFIERS	Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Michigan; Minnesota; Ohio; Wisconsin

ABSTRACT

In this policy brief, an introductory review of early childhood education from a national perspective is followed by brief sketches of the north-central region's action and agendas. The states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin are covered. Concluding commentary identifies three program areas that should be better addressed: provision of developmentally appropriate environments, certification of teachers with regard to standards for early childhood education, and development of parent involvement. References, resources, and state contact persons are listed. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

PS

Policy Briefs

Number 2 • 1989

A Publication of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED328367

Early Childhood Education for At-Risk Children

A National Perspective

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Marianne Kroeger
NCREL
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

by Linda Kunesh, NCREL

Since *A Nation At Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) was released, a number of reforms have been recommended by many national organizations and groups to improve education in the U.S. Few, however, have received as much support as **Early Childhood Education (ECE)** for young children who are at risk of academic failure. ECE generally provides developmentally appropriate activities and experiences for young children and opportunities for parents to become actively involved in the development and education of their children. In addition, health, nutrition, day-care, and social services are often provided.

Targeted to youngsters before they reach kindergarten, ECE is advocated by many diverse and influential groups as a *major* strategy to significantly reduce the risk of academic failure for large numbers of children (e.g., Committee for Economic Development, 1987; the National Governors' Association, 1986, 1987; the Council of Chief State School Officers, 1987, 1988; the National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988).

Many factors have contributed to this diverse support for public investment in preschool programs. For example, children are now the poorest segment of the nation's population. In fact, they are seven times as likely to be poor as those over 65 years of age (Moynihan, 1986). Children born in poverty often suffer from gross malnutrition, recurrent and untreated health problems, psychological and physical stress, child abuse, and learning disabilities. Those who survive infancy are three times more likely to become school dropouts than are children from more economically advantaged homes. Frequently, they are children of children and live in single-parent homes (Committee for Economic Development, 1987).

The dramatic increase in the need for child-care arrangements also has contributed to a national focus on young children. During the mid-1980s, 50 percent of mothers with 1-year-olds had already returned to work (Hodgkinson, 1985). The Children's Defense Fund (1987) predicts that by 1995, two-thirds of all preschool children will have mothers in the work force.

By 1987, 24 states and the District of Columbia had spent state money on educational programs for preschool-aged children, and most states had targeted these programs for at-risk children (Grub, 1987; Gnezda & Sonnier, 1988). According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (Gnezda & Sonnier, 1988), the most significant factor influencing legislative support for ECE was research that demonstrated short- and long-term academic and social benefits to disadvantaged 3- and 4-year-olds who were enrolled in ECE programs. Children enrolled in ECE programs had higher academic performance, required less special education, had better school attendance and graduation rates, pursued more post-secondary education and training, had higher levels of employment and less unemployment, and had fewer contacts with the criminal justice system (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein, & Weikart, 1984). Barnett (1985) found that for every $1 spent on ECE, $4 to $7 for later, more costly remedial and social programs was saved.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (1989) also reported that 33 state legislatures are considering initiating and/or expanding ECE programs as a major strategy to offset "the risks faced by disadvantaged children, putting them on the road to success at an early age." There also appears to be strong public support for federal involvement in the care and education of young children. More than 100 child-care bills were introduced during the 100th Congress. Although none became law in 1988, it was speculated at the time of this printing that at least one bill, such as Smart Start or the Act for Better Child Care, will be enacted during 1989. There is further speculation that funds for Head Start will increase in 1989.

As services for young children are proposed, implemented, and expanded, decisionmakers will need to address specific provisions that ensure developmentally appropriate curriculum and teaching practices; coordinated, comprehensive services for young children and their families; state and local accountability; and program improvement. ■

Policy Briefs are reports on the status of current issues in education from a national perspective, descriptions of actions and agendas in the NCREL region, commentaries by experts from their particular point of view, and resources for further information.

PS 019480

Regional Action & Agendas

Illinois

The Illinois General Assembly passed legislation in 1985 authorizing the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to implement a grant program for public school districts to conduct preschool screening and educational programs for 3- and 4-year olds who are at risk of academic failure. Since 1985, approximately $58.3 million has been appropriated for the program including $23.9 million for FY89. Approximately 11,200 3- and 4-year-olds (of an estimated 112,000 eligible children) are currently being served in 135 projects.

Legislation

ISBE has requested $45.9 million to fund the program for the 1989-90 school year so that more eligible children may be served. In addition, the State Board of Education has approved a change in prekindergarten teacher requirements and will seek legislation to authorize this change.

Future

ISBE is committed to serving young children at risk of academic failure. Additional children will be served as more money becomes available through the legislature.

Indiana

Beginning with the 1988-89 school year, the Indiana Legislature appropriated $20 million per year for school-based programs to assist with the educational development of at-risk students. The law stipulates that eligible programs may include preschool, full-day kindergarten, parental and community involvement, transitional programs, tutoring, remediation, expanded use of school counseling, individualized and model alternative education.

Under this program 20 preschool programs were established using $518,206 and serving 2,108 students classified as at-risk. This funding has also served 2,281 students not classified as at-risk. Local corporations have contributed an additional $24,633.

Legislation

Legislation passed by the 1989 General Assembly increases the funding for the At-Risk program by about $2 million in the second year of the biennium with a requirement that the increase be used for preschool programs. Other legislation requires the Department of Education to study "readiness" tests which could be implemented by school corporations for students in kindergarten through grade two.

Future

Support for preschool programs is picking up momentum. The current Governor campaigned on a platform that promised significant funding support for preschool programs. The Department of Education proposed that $10 million be appropriated to preschool special education in order for the state to receive $12 million in federal matching funds. This proposal is expected to gain more support as the 1991 federal deadline approaches.

Iowa

Beginning January 1, 1989, Iowa funded 24 grant programs for at-risk 3- and 4-year-olds with $1.2 million in state funds, serving 364 children. The Child Development Coordinating Council, a nine-member interagency council, oversees this new initiative. A Head Start-like model is used and provides health, nutrition, education, and human services with a strong parent component.

Legislation

The current funding formula extends through December 31, 1989. The 1989 Iowa General Assembly is expected to allocate additional funds. New legislation allocates $11 million for birth through third grade, as well as for junior high and high school at-risk programs.

Future

The Iowa Department of Education plans to continue as the lead agency. Increased funding is expected. The Coordinating Council's role and responsibilities are expected to increase.

Michigan

Through legislative action the Department of Education has received $17.3 million dollars in fiscal years 1987-88 and 1988-89 to establish and implement a state early childhood education program for 4-year-olds. Monies were appropriated to local and intermediate school districts operating preschool programs, Head Start grantees, university laboratory centers, and community child development/child-care centers, effective September 1, 1988. The Governor has recommended an increase of $23 million for 1989-90 programs.

Legislation

Michigan is reviewing legislation for completion by June 1989. Proposed changes are 1) an increase in funding of per capita child allowances from $2,000 to $2,250, 2) allowing competition projects to be funded for with project review and evaluation, and 3) evaluation of each project to be comprehensive and include all program components.

Future

The Department instituted and will continue efforts to strengthen the early childhood programs including provision of technical assistance and training workshops, establishment of a monitoring and program review system, and collaboration to identify issues and strategies for program enhancement.

Minnesota

Minnesota sees widespread support from the early childhood education/care community for early childhood programs as well as interest in providing options for families with young children and support for integrating disadvantaged children with all others. The Governor's budget would add $1 million for the biennium for a Pre-K at risk grant; $3 million for the biennium for Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE); $16 million for Head Start; and $3 million for expanded Early Childhood Health and Developmental Screening.

Legislation

Current legislation includes the above plus extended day programs in schools. A lower level of funding than the Governor's recommendation is expected. ECE is competing with needs for additional funding in K-12 and higher education. However, there is strong support for known programs, such as Head Start and ECFE.

Future

Longitudinal evaluation of ECFE, emphasis on coordination of programs, and application of information through workshops are planned for the future.

Ohio

The State Board of Education legislative recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly included a funding request to provide preschool programs for at-risk 4-year-olds and parenting programs because the schools alone cannot solve the problem of at-risk children.

Legislation

H.B. 67, which was enacted by the last General Assembly with an effective date of March 17, 1989, gave school districts eligible to receive Disadvantaged Pupil Impact Aid the

authority to use public funds to operate preschool programs. At the present time the Budget Bill as passed by the House includes funding for the expansion of Head Start programs and existing programs operated by public schools.

Future

Ohio will continue to work toward the passage of legislation to provide funding for public school preschool programs for at-risk children, and for the implementation of a statewide parenting program for parents of children birth through age 18.

Wisconsin

In 1985 the Wisconsin legislature amended the Wisconsin *School Code* to reestablish 4-year-old kindergarten state aid based on a per-pupil membership count. The state recognizes the importance of early childhood education and the need to demonstrate state-level support. More than $5 million in state aid was spent in FY88 in 30 of the 430 school districts to serve 5,200 of the 70,000 eligible 4-year-olds in 4-year-old kindergarten programs, which also includes at-risk children. During FY88 schools also served 3,100 4-year-olds in early childhood special education programs and 3,200 4-year-olds in Chapter I funded preschools.

Legislation

The Wisconsin legislature passed a bill in 1985 known as the Preschool to Grade 5 Program (P-5) which targets state resources to elementary schools in Milwaukee, Beloit, and Kenosha with high concentrations of students from low-income families to supplement existing elementary school programs and encourage early skill development. In 1987 funding was established to provide an early childhood consultant to provide consultation and technical assistance to school districts in early childhood education programs.

Since 1985, $6.19 million has been appropriated for the P-5 Program. The Milwaukee School Board is also required by legislation to contract with private, nonprofit, sectarian day-care centers to provide ECE to 4- and 5-year-olds.

Future

Requirements for a new teaching license and teacher preparatory program in ECE will take effect July 1, 1992.

Guest Commentary

by Irene Bandy,
Assistant Superintendent, Ohio Department of Education

Society today presents an environment for many children which will affect their readiness for formal learning. The proportion of children living in poverty has risen since 1970 to over 20 percent, and it is much higher among single-parent, female-headed families.

The percentage of single parents and married women in the work force has risen steadily. The time afforded to the care and nurturing of children becomes limited, and the need for external child care grows.

Children born to teens, children living with abuse, and children with parents who abuse alcohol and drugs present a challenge to the early childhood education field as it works to assure each child the opportunity for success as he or she begins school.

Early intervention appears to be moving from concept to reality across the region. The recognition that an ounce of prevention (early childhood education) is worth a pound of cure (remediation) has assisted legislatures and governors to make commitments to preschool education, early identification and intervention programs, and all-day kindergarten. In most states, the commitment has been reflected in budgets as well as programs.

Although states are approaching implementation in a variety of ways, each is expanding programs as funds become available, especially targeting children who are at risk of beginning school successfully. As we look at the expansion, we must assure that quality is emphasized regardless of where the program is implemented.

Three areas of great importance which are only partially addressed in the region need to be considered. First, there is a growing consensus among early childhood advocates and educators that preschool and kindergarten programs offer developmentally appropriate activities. Providing this type of environment ensures that children are engaged in the activities which will enhance their readiness for more formal, cognitive learning as they enter into elementary school. Certainly young children need play activities, but they can be integrated into the scope and sequence of the curriculum in a meaningful way. Thus the child's development progresses at an individual pace taking him or her through each appropriate level of learning.

Secondly, the teachers in early intervention programs should be certificated under standards for early childhood education. Understanding human growth and development of the young child, how children learn, and the sequence of learning is critical to developing and delivering programs that will make a difference for children, and particularly at-risk children. Other adults with a variety of training levels can assist in the implementation of programs. Maintaining a realistic and safe adult-child ratio is critical to the success of a program. As new concepts and approaches are identified, a mechanism for ongoing staff development should be in place.

A third area is parent involvement. Many parents who wish to be helpful to their young children need assistance. Reaching out to these parents and giving them the skills to work with their child at home supports the early childhood program activities in a meaningful way. Certainly the success of Head Start is partially due to the efforts to involve parents in their children's learning and development. Once success begins, parents will more likely stay engaged with the program or school and stay involved with their child.

Recognizing that education cannot provide the comprehensive services required by young children and their families, there is a need to provide for solid interagency collaborations. Areas such as nutrition and social services are important for the general well-being of the child.

What are our challenges if we are to assure quality early childhood education?

- Strong building and program leadership;
- Standards for training and certification;
- Standards for developmentally appropriate activities as well as healthy, safe environments;
- Parenting components to each program; and
- Collaborative efforts for comprehensive services.

We can learn from each other and eliminate the duplication of trial and error. Resources are limited — let us work together and communicate so that all may benefit as we build success for our next generation of children.■

References & Resources

Barnett, W. S. (1985). The Perry Preschool Program and its long-term effects: A benefit-cost analysis. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

Berrueta-Clement, J. R., Schweinhart, L. J., Barnett, W. S., Epstein, A. S., & Weikart, D. P. (1984). Changed lives: The effects of the Perry Preschool Program on youths through age 19. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

Children's Defense Fund. (1987). Childcare: The time is now. Washington, DC: Author.

Committee for Economic Development. (1987). Children in need: Investment strategies for the educationally disadvantaged. New York: Author, Research and Policy Committee.

Council of Chief State School Officers. (1987). Elements of a model state statute to provide educational entitlements for at-risk students. Washington, DC: Author.

Council of Chief State School Officers. (1988). Early childhood and family education. Washington, DC: Author.

Gnezda, T., & Sonnier, C. (1988). Early childhood education: The status of state involvement (State Legislative Report, Vol. 13, No. 16). Denver, CO: National Conference of State Legislatures.

Grub, W. N. (1987). Young children face the states: Issues and options for early childhood programs. New Brunswick, NJ: Center for Policy Research in Education.

Hodgkinson, H.L. (1985). All one system: Demographics of education — kindergaraten through graduate school. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership.

Moynihan, D. P. (1986). Family and nation. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

National Association of State Boards of Education. (1988). Right from the start, the report of the NASBE task force on early childhood education. Alexandria, VA: Author.

National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

National Conference of State Legislatures. (1989). Educational improvements emerge as priorities for '89. State Legislatures, 15, (2) 6.

National Governors' Association (1986). Time for results: The governors' 1991 report on education. Washington, DC: Author, Center for Policy Research and Analysis.

National Governors' Association (1987). The first sixty months. Washington, DC: Author, Committee on Human Resources and Center for Policy Research.

Additional Resources

Bredekamp, S. (Ed.). (1987). Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Kagan, S. L. (1989). Early care and education: Tackling the tough issues. Phi Delta Kappan, 70, 433-439.

Kunesh, L. G. (in press). Early intervention for at-risk children in the North Central Region. Elmhurst, IL: North Central Regional Educational Laboratory.

National Black Child Development Institute, Inc. (1987). Safeguards: Guidelines for establishing programs for four-year-olds in the public schools. Washington, DC: Author.

Peterson, N. L. (1987). Early intervention for handicapped and at-risk children: An introduction to early childhood special education. Denver, CO: Love Publishing Company.

Schweinhart, L. J. (1985). The preschool challenge. (High/Scope Early Childhood Policy Papers, No. 4). Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

Slavenas, R., & Nowakowski, J. (in press). Improving programs for young children by applying a decision-based evaluation model. Early Childhood Research Quarterly.

Warger, C. (Ed.). (1988). A resource guide to public school early childhood programs. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

State Contacts

ILLINOIS
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North First Street
Springfield, Illinois 62777
Sally Pancrazio
217/782-3950 or
Lyndon Wharton
217/782-0322

INDIANA
Indiana Department of Education
229 State House
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
Carol D'Amico
317-232-6667

IOWA
Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0416
Carol Alexander Phillips
515-281-7844 or
Ray Morley (At Risk)
515/281-5313

MICHIGAN
Michigan Department of Education
P.O. Box 30008
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Carolyn Logan
517/373-8483

MINNESOTA
Minnesota Department of Education
992 Capitol Square Building
St. Paul, Minnesota 55101
Lois Engstrom
612-297-2441

OHIO
Ohio Department of Education
65 South Front Street-Room 202
Columbus, Ohio 43266-0308
Jane Wiechel
614/466-0224

WISCONSIN
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
125 South Webster
P.O. Box 7841
Madison, Wisconsin 53707
Jim McCoy
608-266-1000

Please contact individual states for resources and available products.

Opinions expressed in the commentaries do not necessarily reflect the views of the NCREL staff or Board. Facts and ideas presented in NCREL's *Policy Briefs* are intended to survey a current issue and not to advocate a particular position.

Policy Briefs
A publication of the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
295 Emroy Avenue
Elmhurst, Illinois 60126

Telephone 312-941-7677
Source #BD1093
Fax 312-941-7163

Jeri Nowakowski, *Executive Director*
Nancy Fulford, *Editor*
Marianne Kroeger, *Production Editor*

This publication is based on work sponsored wholly or in part by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), Department of Education, under Contract Number 400-86-0004. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department of Education, or any other agency in the U.S. Government.

Designed and produced on the desktop by Peter D. Reid Design

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage PAID
Elmhurst, Illinois
Permit No. 338